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SEN. BASHAM: EPA RULE CHANGES ON SEWAGE DISCHARGE PUT PUBLIC AT RISK

LANSING- State Senator Ray Basham (D-Taylor) today publicly criticized the recent decision by the Bush Administration to ease EPA rules regarding the intentional release of raw sewage into rivers and lakes. Sen. Basham stated that the rules changes not only fail to take into account policy improvements that he had championed but actually serve to weaken existing standards on water quality.

“What the Bush administration is proposing is letting hundreds of communities dump millions of gallons of raw sewage directly into our rivers and streams,” said Sen. Basham. “Dumping on such a massive scale puts the public in direct threat from disease carrying microbes and puts an already fragile ecosystem under greater stress.”

Federal regulations currently require sewage to run through a series of treatment steps designed to kill bacteria and protect public health. However, the Bush administration’s proposed rule changes will allow for the dumping of untreated sewage directly into waterways as a way of dealing with run off during high rains.

Sen. Basham requested tougher EPA regulations following the August 11, 2003 blackout that forced the Detroit Water and Sewage Department to dump roughly a million gallons of raw sewage into the Detroit River. The dumping- which environmentalists say caused serious damage to the local ecosystem- could have been avoided if the sewage facility had sufficient back-up generators. The Taylor Democrat had proposed that all of the nation’s water treatment facilities be evaluated to insure that they had adequate back-up generating power on site to avoid a similar incident.

“It troubles me that something as serious as the dumping of almost a million gallons of raw sewage into the Detroit River was not enough of a wake-up call for the EPA,” said Basham. “If we can just get the regulatory authorities to act responsibly, we can prevent this sort of incident from happening again.”

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